

VZCZCXRO0518  
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHDH RUEHIHL RUEHKUK  
DE RUEHGB #1320/01 1401533  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH ZDK CTG SEVERAL SERVICES  
P 201533Z MAY 09  
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3124  
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/HQ USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001320

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/12/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#)

SUBJECT: U/S BURNS, AND U/S FLOURNOY,S MEETING VP HASHEMI  
AND THE IIP

BAGHDAD 00001320 001.3 OF 002

Classified By: Acting Political Minister Counselor John G. Fox for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. On May 12, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Bill Burns and Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Michele Flournoy met with Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi and members of his Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) to discuss a myriad of national issues. IIP expressed confidence that national elections would take place on January 31, 2010. IIP members questioned the validity of UNAMI's Disputed Internal Boundaries (DIBs) reports, accusing the United Nations of including undisputed territories for the purpose of negotiations. Hashemi raised concerns about pervasive Iranian influence in both the security and political arenas. He said he hoped that the USG was not sacrificing its interest in Iraq for its growing interest in Iran. Hashemi credited the U.S. military surge for reinstating stability, recognized the need for the U.S. to abide by the U.S. - Iraq Security Agreement (SA), but questioned what will fill the vacuum after the military draws down. U/S Flournoy stated that Iraq has achieved great progress and expressed the USG's commitment to the SA and Iraq's future success. She assured the group that President Obama's new Iraq policy focuses on "responsible" troop withdrawal and will assist the GOI in developing a stable, self-reliant and democratic Iraq. END SUMMARY.

-----  
NATIONAL ELECTIONS ARE A GO  
-----

¶2. (C) In response to U/S Flournoy's inquiries about national elections, IIP member of Parliament Abdul Karim al-Sammarraie explained that the Iraqi constitution requires elections to take place 45 days before the first seating of the Council of Representatives (CoR) (March 16, 2006). Sammarraie was confident that the CoR and Iraq High Electoral Commission (IHEC) would perform all the necessary preparations so that elections can take place on January 31, ¶2010. He said that the IIP favors open candidate list elections but noted that many political blocs prefer closed lists.

-----  
NATIONAL RECONCILIATION NOT WORKING  
-----

¶3. (C) Regarding national reconciliation, Sammarraie asserted that some groups are not genuinely interested in reconciliation. He described a recent reconciliation conference as unsuccessful. Specifically, promises of integration for the Sons of Iraq (SOI) have been broken. He said that the SOI remain jobless and its leadership targeted by the GOI. He warned to expect more problems. Sammarraie

said that over fifty percent (50%) of internally displaced persons (IDPs) have returned to their original areas but that eighty percent (80%) of refugees who fled Iraq during civil strife have not returned. He was concerned that Baghdad neighborhoods are still segregated by sect. He expressed dismay about the lack of government involvement in these issues and urged both the USG and international community to pressure the GOI to address them.

-----  
NO ARAB-KURD ISSUES  
-----

¶4. (C) In answer to U/S Flournoy's inquiries about Arab-Kurd issues, Sammarraie discounted Arab-Kurd tensions per se, indicating that tensions in the north were political and constitutional in nature, rather than ethnic. Sammarraie noted that the Kurdish parties capitalized on a time of Qinstability, codified their gains in the Constitution, and are not willing to compromise those gains now. He asserted that there is a resulting need for Constitutional review. Sammarraie accused Special Representative of the (UN) Secretary General Steffan De Mistura of including areas that are not under dispute in UNAMI's Disputed Internal Boundaries (DIBs) reports. He alleged that this was done to give the Kurds "wiggle room" for negotiations. He stated that Peshmerga controlled areas (below the Green Line) do not mean that these areas automatically will become part of Kurdistan. Sammarraie said Kirkuk was the most important disputed area. He insisted that the CoR Article 23 Committee be given adequate time to produce its report on Kirkuk. He also insisted that the UNAMI reports not be used to circumvent the Article 23 Committee process. He stated that the GOI never mandated the UNAMI reports and that they create a false facts-on-the-ground starting point for negotiations. He

BAGHDAD 00001320 002.2 OF 002

added that the Article 140 3-step process (reports, referendum, census) will take a long time to implement and that everyone must exercise patience.

-----  
OBAMA's NEW IRAQ POLICY  
-----

¶5. (C) IIP Parliamentarian Amer Habib Al-Azawi stated that the IIP was pleased with official statements by President Obama, Vice President Biden and Secretary Clinton. In particular, Azawi noted Biden's promise that the USG will help build institutions and not individuals. He called attention to Clinton's promise to ensure Iraq will have non-sectarian and professional security forces. Azawi stated that it is time to shift USG policy away from security and more toward economic development. Speaking from personal experience, Azawi asked the USG to grant more educational exchange programs. Hashemi credited the military surge with providing Iraqi stability since 2006 but warned of an impending financial crisis if oil prices remain low. U/S Burns reaffirmed the importance of the Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA) and agreed with Hashemi's view that the USG and GOI must translate that agreement into tangible cooperation including on economic issues.

-----  
PERVASIVE IRANIAN INFLUENCE  
-----

¶6. (C) VP Hashemi's Chief of Staff Saif Abd al-Rahman referenced U/S Flournoy's previous Congressional testimony stating that the USG will ensure Iraq is no longer a safe haven for foreign fighters, that there will be no humanitarian crisis and no military crisis. Al-Rahman said Iraq is not yet a state but a "collection of competing interests in a state-like environment." Left alone, this situation may develop into a strong-man state. He argued

that Iran understands this and is in Iraq for the long-term whereas the U.S. is only here for the short-term. He added that Iran has always had a security and political "file" on Iraq. Al-Rahman warned of pervasive Iranian influence, especially in the form of soft power. He asked the U.S. to start investing in and trading with Iraq to displace Iran's prominence. (Note: Rahman, who has lived in the U.S. extensively and speaks unaccented English, also advises Speaker of the CoR Sammaraie.)

¶7. (C) To help combat Iranian influence, VP Hashemi took credit for involving Turkey in Iraq. He said he hoped that the U.S. was not trading interest in Iraq for interest in Iran. Hashemi complained that for the last six years the Iraq-Iran border has been insecure, allowing Iran to easily target Iraqi territory. Hashemi expressed dismay that the U.S. spent so much money on training the Iraqi Army and yet the caliber of the IA is sorely lacking. He said he had called upon Turkey/NATO and King Abdullah in Amman to provide additional training for IA troops. He noted that there are still professional Iranian backed militia elements serving in the IA. He concluded by acknowledging the need for the U.S. military to abide by the SA but asked what will fill the vacuum left when the U.S. military draws down. U/S Burns reiterated that the U.S. is determined to keep its commitments to Iraq, particularly to help Iraq build strong political and security institutions and will not exchange Iraq's security as part of discussions with Iran.

HILL